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ANNOP MAGNESS
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DEC 10 2004

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Annop Magness
Application No. 09/942,855
Filed: August 29, 2001
Attorney Docket No.

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed November 8, 2004, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration or petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition Under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply to the "Notice of Allowability" (the "Notice") mailed March 24, 2004, which set a statutory period for reply of three-month from its mailing date. No response was received within the allowable period, and the application became abandoned on June 25, 2004. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on August 18, 2004.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)[1] must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,[2] unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due

[1]As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

[2] In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks item (3).

The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.

"In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner's interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference."[3]

"[T]he Commissioner's discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant's delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner's adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense."[4]

"The court's review of a Commissioner's decision is 'limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.'"[5]
"The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgment for that of the agency."[6]

The standard

"[T]he question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."[7]

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[3]Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.")

[4]Commissariat A L'Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

[5]Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing Camp v. Pitts, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); Smith v. Mossinghoff, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

[6]Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass'n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

[7]Id.

The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"[8] Nonawarness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.[9]

Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances

In the instant petition, petitioner maintains that the circumstances leading to the abandonment of the application meet the aforementioned unavoidable standard and, therefore, petitioner qualifies for relief under 37 CFR 1.137(a). In support thereof, petitioner asserts that petitioner was out of town and relied on a friend to receive notices from the Patent and Trademark Office and mail responsive correspondence and was also injured during the relevant period.

With regard to item (3) above, the aforementioned argument of petitioner in support of petitioner's belief that the above-cited application was unavoidably abandoned is not persuasive. The reason petitioner's argument must necessarily fail are addressed below.

The evidentiary standard for a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) requires that petitioner demonstrate that petitioner acted reasonably and prudently in the prosecution of the application and treated the prosecution of the application as his most important business. It is not evident from the petition whether petitioner's friend was an agent knowledgeable in the patent process. Absent some indication that petitioner's friend was familiar with the patent process and was aware of the gravity of the matter he was asked to handle, petitioner's decision to place the important business of prosecuting the application—for any length of time—with an inexperienced friend cannot be considered prudent. Relative to the satisfying the unavoidable standard, petitioner would have to demonstrate that the friend understood and accepted the responsibility of handling the papers and had some knowledge of the process such that petitioner's decision to rely on the friend can be considered prudent. If this can be demonstrated by petitioner, petitioner must then explain the why the friend—who was acting as petitioner's—agent failed in his responsibility and his delay in prosecuting the application on petitioner's behalf must also satisfy the unavoidable standard.

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[8] See In re Mattulah, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

[9] See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawarness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.

As to petitioner's claim of being injured, petitioner must demonstrate that the injury took place during the relevant period--beginning March 24, 2004 until the filing of a grantable petition—and that the injury was such that petitioner was unable to respond to the Notice of Allowability and was unable to file a petition until now. Copies of doctor's notes, medical records, and bills covering the relevant period may demonstrate this. Petitioner should be careful to redact all irrelevant personal information, i.e., social security and account numbers.

Petitioner may wish to consider filing a petition to revive based on unintentional abandonment under 37 CFR 1.137(b) (enclosed). A grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the required reply (already submitted), the required petition fee ($1,500.00 for a large entity and $750.00 for a verified small entity), and a statement that the **entire** delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Mail Stop Petitions
Commissioner for Patents
Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (703) 872-9306
Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries should be directed to the undersigned (571) 272-3222.

Kenya A. McLaughlin
Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions

Enclosure: Form PTO/SB/64